

## GOVERNOR (1896-1905 : WELLS) [446]

### CORRESPONDENCE, 1895-1905.

5.4 cu. ft., and 21 reels of microfilm

**DESCRIPTION:** Governor Well's correspondence is organized into three subseries. The main files consist of original copies of correspondence, most of which were sent to the Governor. They also contain copies of letters sent by the Governor's office, originally recorded in separate letterbooks and later interfiled with incoming letters. The copies of the letterbooks, existing on microfilm, serve as a partial index to the main correspondence. The miscellaneous correspondence on reel one consists of letters added to the series after documents were numbered, and they relate chiefly to the transition period between territorial and state government. The Governor's correspondence in Box 1 was originally removed from the TERRITORIAL EXECUTIVE PAPERS, series 241, and each document bears a number assigned to it in that series. These also relate to the transition period between governments.

The correspondence includes letters from private citizens requesting favors and expressing opinions; and there is correspondence with members of the legislature, officers of executive departments, and managers of state institutions about topics related to their respective duties. Also included is correspondence with national officials and officials from other states. Other documents are often attached to the correspondence or are filed in the records. These include death warrants, notices of reward, or court documents in relation to criminal matters, copies of proclamations or attorney general's opinions; financial documents relating to the administration of state agencies; clippings or pamphlets collected about national issues of the day. Letters from those seeking jobs in state government or from those recommending them, and communications with the legislature about specific bills are the most numerous. Other topics covered represent the major political and social issues faced by the Governor during his nine years in office.

Governor Heber M. Wells, a member of the Republican Party, was elected as the first Governor of the State of Utah during November, 1895. He had served as a member of the

1895 Constitutional Convention in anticipation of Utah's admission to the Union. On January 4, 1896, President Grover Cleveland signed a statehood proclamation making Utah a state. During the transitional period which followed, Wells established a cooperative productive relationship with the legislature. He was then able to push for major reforms in important areas and to solve several problems during his two terms in office.

Much of the early correspondence dealt with the financial crisis faced by several state institutions. The Governor was granted emergency appropriations for the following institutions: the Insane Asylum; the State Industrial School; the prison, the School for the Deaf, Dumb and Blind; the Agricultural College; and the University of Utah. Reorganization and sometimes relocation reduced operating costs. The Governor was directly involved with the administration of these institutions throughout his tenure, and this is reflected in the volume of correspondence about them.

The new Constitution and the Enabling Act made Utah responsible for its territorial debts. A bond issue was passed which resulted in significant revenue for the state. Further funds were raised through organization of the Board of Equalization which taxed properties that had previously escaped taxation.

The Governor was active in improving the legal system in the new state. He advocated the revision, codification, and annotation of Utah's laws in which obsolete or inappropriate laws were eliminated. Attorney General's opinions were published and a well stocked law library was created.

Many documents addressed the Governor's support for traditions and also for new developments in education: offering a free system of education from kindergarten thru college; increasing economy, simplicity, and efficiency of the schools by consolidating school districts; providing training for the mentally retarded in the School for the Deaf, Dumb and blind; relocating the University of Utah on a sixty-acre tract of land provided by the federal government; creating a branch of the Normal School for the training of teachers; advancing a close working relationship between farmers and the Agricultural College; promoting a fixed levy to the University of Utah and the Agricultural College rather than making them dependent on uncertain appropriations. With the Governor's enthusiastic help the Utah Art Institute was created. It was the first organization of its kind in the United States that was state supported. Utah received national prominence and was recognized as a leader in advancing artistic expression.

Wells was closely involved in Utah's crime problems. He served as a member of the Board of Pardons, offered rewards for the capture of criminals; denied a stay of execution for a man who had murdered his wife; sponsored a posse in an attempt to capture Butch Cassidy and his gang; assisted in the conversion of the prison from federal to state control; emphasized an educational rather than a penal atmosphere in the State Industrial School; opposed the housing of youthful offenders with hardened criminals; and advocated a curfew law for the youth.

The Governor was instrumental in pushing for enactment of pure water, food, and drug laws.

When an epidemic of smallpox occurred in areas throughout the state, there was widespread resistance by the public to vaccination or the closing of schools to prevent spread of the disease. Lives were unnecessarily sacrificed by the public's ignorance or indifference to good health practices.

Transportation of mining, agricultural, and manufacturing products were dependent upon access to the railroad. Due to monopolistic practices the railroads were imposing unrealistically high rates. Wells supported a bill to place restrictions on what the railroads could charge. Railroad officials threatened to halt all railroad construction in Utah if the bill passed; the bill was defeated. However, Wells did improve transportation by ordering construction and improvement of roads and bridges throughout the state.

Farmers' Institutes were held and bulletins issued to explain the latest farming techniques. Experimental farms found methods of growing certain types of crops on dry lands that had been considered useless. Knowledge of proper orchard methods resulted in the control of insects and diseases which had blighted the fruit industry. Diseased trees were prevented from being imported into the state, and crops were coordinated to prevent waste. These measures resulted in a dramatic improvement in the production of the fruit industry. Wells supported establishment of a Livestock Commission to provide for healthy, sheep, cattle, horse, swine, and poultry. The Commission provided for inspection, quarantine and condemnation of diseased animals. Utah was recognized as a leader in irrigation practices. The Utah Code contained improvements to reduce litigation involving conflicts over water rights. The Office of the State Engineer provided advice without cost, and a pamphlet was issued explaining methods to improve irrigation practices. The office established uniformity in plans and specifications for irrigation systems and approved plans for canals, dams, and reservoirs.

The Governor advocated legislation to combat the widespread destruction of fish and game by poachers. Fish supplies were largely restored by construction of a fish hatchery. Bounties were placed on wild animals which were responsible for the destruction of crops and domestic animals. President Cleveland set apart a million acres as a forest reserve in the Uintah Mountains at the headwaters of the four largest rivers of the state: the Bear, the Weber, the Provo, and the Duchesne. The water supply for farming and other industries was dependent on the forest to maintain the porous nature of the ground and protect the watershed. Forest reserves were also established in Sevier and Wayne counties.

When War with Spain was declared in 1898 much of the Governor's correspondence was concerned with the complexities of mobilizing troops for combat; he called for 500 troops, which was the quota requested from Utah. The war lasted for fifteen months with Utah soldiers engaging in many campaigns in the Philippines. The Governor declared August 19, 1899, as a legal holiday to honor returning troops. The war's aftermath continued to generate correspondence concerning the war debt as well as problems of individual soldiers.

Labor issues involving tragedy, striking employees, and the passage of progressive legislation are well documented. On May 1, 1900, an explosion occurred in Winter Quarters Coal Mine

in Scofield, Utah killing 200 men and injuring seven others. The Governor issued an appeal thru the Associated Press for assistance; monetary support and expressions of sympathy were received from all parts of the United States. Then, during 1903, a strike, which threatened to turn violent, was called by employees of the Utah Fuel Company. The sheriff of Carbon County called on the Governor for help in maintaining law and order at Scofield, Castle Gate, and Sunnyside. Wells called out the militia; relative peace was maintained, but the troops remained on duty for about six weeks. He also backed a bill to provide an eight hour work day for mining and smelting employees; its passage was credited with generally improving labor conditions in Utah.

Utah participated in several events which the Governor enthusiastically supported. A Semi-Centennial Celebration was held in 1897 to honor the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of pioneers in Utah; it lasted for five days and received national attention. As an advertisement for the new state, Utah participated in several expositions presenting elaborate displays of mining, other industry, agriculture, and the arts. An exposition of all the Trans-Mississippi States was held in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1898; an International Exposition at Paris, France, was held in 1900; the Louisiana Purchase Exposition was held in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1904; the Lewis and Clark Centennial was held in Portland, Oregon, in 1905.

**ARRANGEMENT:** Chronological by date within each subseries. Documents are numbered consecutively in box 1 and in the main correspondence.

**RELATED RECORDS:** The proclamations in the Governor's EXECUTIVE ORDERS pertain to many of the topics in this series. SPANISH AMERICAN WAR RECORDS explain more fully the role of Utah in the war. LEGISLATIVE RECORDS are available for the years that Wells served as Governor.

**PROCESSING NOTE:** The Office of the Governor transferred these records to the Archives in 1955. Microfilming of the series began in 1970 and resumed intermittently over several years until its completion in 1989. After microfilming, pages from the original letterbooks were interfiled with the main correspondence. Correspondence of Governor Wells found in the TERRITORIAL EXECUTIVE PAPERS, series 241, were added to this series during processing; they bear numbers assigned to them when that series was originally processed and can be found in the first seven folders of box one. Archival processing was completed during 1989.

## CONTAINER LIST

Reel	Box	Description
1	none	Miscellaneous correspondence; Jan. 1896-May 1896
2	1	Miscellaneous correspondence; 15001-15205
3	2	General correspondence; 1-409, Jan. 1895-Feb. 1896

<b>Reel</b>	<b>Box</b>	<b>Description</b>
4	2	General correspondence; 409-1576, Feb. 1896-Sept. 1896
5	2	General correspondence; 1576-2024, Sept. 1896-Dec. 1896
5	3	General correspondence; 2025-2720, Jan. 1897-Mar. 1897
6	3	General correspondence; 2720-3842, Mar. 1897-Apr. 1898
7	3	General correspondence; 3842-4464, Apr. 1898-June 1898
7	4	General correspondence; 4465-5018, June 1898-July 1898
8	4	General correspondence; 5018-6174, July 1898-Mar. 1899
9	4	General correspondence; 6174-7269, Mar. 1899-Aug. 1899
10	4	General correspondence; 7269-7882, Aug. 1899-Dec. 1900
10	5	General correspondence; 7883-8399, Jan. 1900-May 1900
11	5	General correspondence; 8399-9533, May 1900-Apr. 1901
12	5	General correspondence; 9533-10647, Apr. 1901-Apr. 1902
13	5	General correspondence; 10647-10810, Apr. 1902-June 1902
13	6	General correspondence; 10811-11267, June 1902-Dec. 1902
14	6	General correspondence; 11267-12448, Dec. 1902-Oct. 1903
15	6	General correspondence; 12448-13498, Oct. 1903-Dec. 1904
16	none	Letterbooks; Vol. 1, Mar. 1896-May 1897
17	none	Letterbooks; Vol. 2, May 1897-Apr. 1898
18	none	Letterbooks; Vol. 3, Apr. 1898-May, 1899
19	none	Letterbooks; Vol. 4, May. 1899-June 1901
20	none	Letterbooks; Vol. 5, June 1901-Feb. 1904
21	none	Letterbooks; Vol. 6, Mar. 1904-Jan. 1905